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Ethnic minority identity and group context: Self-descriptions, acculturation attitudes and group evaluations in an intra- and intergroup situation

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Abstract

In an experimental questionnaire study among Chinese participants living in the Netherlands, it was found that self-descriptions, acculturation attitudes and ingroup evaluation were affected by the comparative group context. Following self-categorization theory, different predictions were tested and supported. Self-ratings on trait adjectives systematically differed between an intragroup (Chinese) and an intergroup (Chinese versus Dutch) context. Furthermore, ethnic self-categorization turned out to be related to self-descriptions in the intragroup context, whereas ethnic self-esteem showed an effect on self-descriptions in the intergroup context. Acculturation attitudes and ingroup favouritism were also affected by the comparative context. In the intergroup context, participants were more strongly in favour of heritage culture maintenance and reported higher ingroup favouritism than in the intragroup context. It is concluded that studies on ethnic minorities should consider the important and often neglected intragroup processes and comparisons in addition to the familiar minority–majority group comparisons. Copyright © 2002 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Although questions of ethnicity, migration and multiculturalism are hotly debated in many European countries, European social psychologists have not devoted much attention to ethnic issues. In contrast, in the United States increased interest in ethnicity and related issues is evident across all areas of (social) psychology (Phinney, 1996). Interestingly, theoretical ideas developed in Europe, particularly Social Identity Theory (SIT: Tajfel & Turner, 1986), are used by many of these US studies (e.g. Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Gurin, Hurtado, & Peng, 1994). SIT, and especially its continuation and elaboration, Self-Categorization Theory (SCT: Turner et al., 1987, 1994), provide valuable and influential accounts of the meaning of ethnic minority identity. For example, these theories can be used to examine ethnicity in an intragroup and intergroup situation.

Social psychological research typically investigates ethnic identity in relation to the majority group. However, issues of ethnic identity have not only relevance in relation to this group, but also in relation to one's own group. Hutnik (1991) and others (e.g. Roosens, 1994) have argued that ethnic minority groups are 'ethnic' from the 'inside' because a common imagined origin and culture are used for

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self-definition. Qualitative studies on ethnic minorities show that not only intergroup but also intragroup comparisons are frequent and important for describing oneself, defining one's place in society and for group attitudes (e.g. Verkuyten, 1997; Waters, 1994). Thus, it seems important to study ethnic minority issues in different group contexts.

In the present research, an experimental questionnaire study was conducted among Chinese participants living in the Netherlands. Self-descriptions, acculturation attitudes and group evaluations as aspects of ethnic minority identity (Phinney, 1990) were examined in both an intragroup and intergroup context. What it means to be Chinese may be one thing in relation to other Chinese and quite another in relation to the Dutch. Additionally, how one thinks about cultural maintenance and cultural contacts, and how Chinese and Dutch people are evaluated, may also differ in an intragroup and an intergroup context. These kinds of differences would question approaches that treat ethnic identity as an enduring and relatively stable set of attitudes, and would argue for more context sensitive approaches. The central idea examined in this study, is that aspects of ethnic minority identity are not absolute, but depend on the comparative group context in which they are grounded.

SELF-DESCRIPTORS AND GROUP CONTEXT

According to SCT, both personal and social identity involve comparison processes. The difference between the two is the level of inclusiveness at which similarities and differences are described. Self-descriptions are not defined by specific traits but by the level of categorization and comparison. Hence, depending on the social context, traits such as modesty, patience or having a sense of duty can meaningfully define personal identity as well as social identities. According to SCT, personal identity is particularly related to intragroup comparisons, whereas social self-definition is more likely to occur in an intergroup context (e.g. Hogg & Turner, 1987). Thus, self-definition on the individual level is predominantly based on and constrained by intragroup comparisons. The content of personal identity depends on the ingroup within which distinctions and differentiations are made. In contrast, when social identity is salient, group members self-stereotype themselves in terms of what characterizes the ingroup in relation to a relevant outgroup. Thus, the same Chinese person may describe herself differently in relation to her ethnic ingroup than in relation to the Dutch. Changes in identity from the personal to the social level may affect self-descriptions.

In the present study we examined this idea by investigating self-description in both an intragroup and an intergroup context. Participants were asked to rate themselves in comparison to their ethnic ingroup (Chinese) and in comparison to the majority outgroup (Dutch). It was expected that self-descriptions would differ between the two conditions. What was particularly expected to be used in the intergroup context were the stereotypical traits which maximize perceived differences between the Chinese and the Dutch (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). Hence, it was expected in the present study that for self-description familiar and commonly used stereotypes about the Chinese (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Geense & Pels, 1998) would be used more in the intergroup than the intragroup condition. That is, participants will define themselves, for example, as being more reserved, emotionally controlled, obedient, modest and having a sense of duty in relation to the Dutch than in relation to Chinese.

ACCULTURATION ATTITUDES

Berry (1990, 1997) argues that acculturation attitudes are based on responses to two focal issues or dimensions: the extent to which ethnic minority groups value and desire the maintenance of heritage

culture, and the extent to which contacts and relationships with the majority group are considered important. The positions people take on these issues imply different conceptions of the place of minority groups within society (Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senecal, 1997). This conceptualization of acculturation is influential and widely discussed. For us three points of discussion are important. These points relate to, first, the approach taken, second, the interpretation of acculturation attitudes, and, third, the measurement of acculturation.

First, thinking about acculturation can follow an uni-dimensional or bi-dimensional approach. The first approach is based on an assimilation perspective and sees heritage culture maintenance and mainstream contacts as bipolar phenomena. In contrast, in a bi-dimensional approach it is assumed that cultural maintenance and contacts are not necessarily bipolar or mutually exclusive. It is possible that these are two relatively independent dimensions which might result in bicultural positions. A bi-dimensional framework makes possible a combination of culture maintenance and mainstream contacts, resulting in four different acculturation positions¹ (Berry, 1997; Bochner, 1982). Assimilation or one-sided adaptation to the dominant culture without preservation of heritage culture is one of these positions. The opposite of assimilation is separation, or the one-sided maintenance of heritage culture without a focus on the dominant culture. In addition to these two positions, integration refers to that form of acculturation that favours both culture maintenance and cultural contacts, whereas marginalization refers to the rejection of both cultures.

In three studies, Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000) explicitly compared the uni-dimensional and bi-dimensional models of acculturation. They conclude that the latter constitutes a broader and more valid framework than the former. Other studies have reached a similar conclusion (e.g. Berry & Sam, 1996; Horenczyk, 1996; Hutnik, 1991; Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Joy, 1996; Taylor & Lambert, 1996). Thus, there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to use a bi-dimensional perspective instead of an uni-dimensional one.

Second, there is the question of how to interpret the different acculturation positions.² Most studies have focused on the examination of psychological acculturation or the mental and behavioural changes that an individual experiences. The focus is on relatively stable or enduring changes in internal dispositions and characteristics. All this effort has led to an impressive body of work with some well-established findings (see Berry & Sam, 1996). However, acculturation attitudes can also be examined as context-sensitive responses to questions of heritage culture maintenance and change. For SCT, categorization, stereotyping, group evaluations and related phenomena are context dependent processes rather than expressions of enduring and stable psychological characteristics. Thus, depending on the comparative context, ethnic minorities may evaluate cultural maintenance and mainstream contacts differently. For example, in relation to the majority group arguing for heritage culture maintenance may be an assertion or reaffirmation of identity (Kosmitzki, 1996), whereas in relation to the ethnic ingroup it may indicate commitment and loyalty (Verkuyten, 1999). Issues of cultural maintenance and change may have a different meaning in an intragroup and in an intergroup situation. Here we examine whether acculturation attitudes depend on the comparative context.

Third, different methods have been used to assess acculturation attitudes. One type of method uses four separate subscales to measure assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. However,

¹Acculturation responses have been described using various terms with their own particular connotations. Berry prefers the terms acculturation 'attitudes' and 'strategies'. Others have used the terms 'styles' or 'modes'. Here, we use the term 'positions'. The reason is that we examine acculturation attitudes as context dependent responses to issues of heritage culture maintenance and cultural contacts with the mainstream, and not as more or less enduring styles or strategies.

²Language is not neutral and labels often reflect a particular perspective. Multi-ethnic societies are sensitive to language because it may influence thinking about positions and responsibilities, and may imply a specific understanding and implicit political stance. The well-known labels used in this model are deemed to reflect the perspective of the majority group. From a minority perspective, other terms may be more adequate. For example, instead of talking about 'separation', minority groups may talk about 'loyalty', and instead of 'integration' about 'disloyalty'.

this type of measurement has been criticized on both conceptual and methodological grounds (see Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). For example, the scale items are lengthy and probably tap broader domains than specified in the four acculturation positions. Hence, different researchers have argued for separate assessments of the two dimensions of acculturation (e.g. Ryder et al., 2000; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). A bipartite split of these two measures can be used to classify participants into the four positions of acculturation.

GROUP EVALUATIONS

LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) argue that developing positive attitudes towards both the ethnic ingroup and the majority group is an important aspect of adaptation processes and the establishment of bicultural competence. Others have put forward similar arguments (e.g. Cross, 1991). However, group evaluations may be dependent on social context. Many evaluative reactions to groups are context- and situation-specific. For SCT, variation in the way people categorize themselves and others is the rule rather than the exception. Furthermore, group evaluations and their determinants depend on the level of self-definition (see Reynolds, Turner, Haslam, & Ryan, 2001; Verkuyten & Hagendoorn, 1998). Ingroup favouritism or the tendency to evaluate one's own group more positively than the outgroup can especially be expected in an intergroup context. In this context, ingroup favouritism may contribute to a positive social identity. Thus, a relatively positive evaluation by a Chinese person of the Chinese is especially likely to occur when ethnic identity is salient and less so in the context where differences between oneself and other Chinese are stressed. We tested this prediction by assessing participants' overall evaluation of the Chinese and the Dutch.

ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION

Numerous studies have documented the important role of social identification in group phenomena (see Brewer & Miller, 1996; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). However, the term 'identification' is a complex and ambiguous one requiring clarification (Deaux, 1996). Various studies on ethnic identity (e.g. Garza & Herzinger, 1987; Giles, Taylor, Lambert, & Albert, 1976; Phinney, 1990; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998), and social identity in general (e.g. Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Jackson & Smith, 1999; Karasawa, 1991; Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997; Verkuyten & Nekuee, 1999) have shown that different aspects of identification can be distinguished, particularly a more cognitive and evaluative way of identifying.

In SCT, the focus is on the contextual and momentary salience of self-definitions. However, SCT does not deny the existence of more stable individual differences in the tendency to define oneself in group terms (Turner, 1999). Some people are more than others inclined to see themselves as typical group members and this inclination is an important determinant of a person's contextual self-definition. Following Ellemers et al. (1999) we will use the term self-categorization for this first more cognitive form of identification.

Defining oneself as a member of an ethnic category does not necessarily imply that one identifies *with* this category (Lange, 1989). This latter form of identification involves an evaluative and emotional connotation with a particular group membership. In SIT, identification is linked to the value and evaluative significance of group membership. SIT assumes that the group member is motivated by a need for positive self-esteem *as* a group member. Crocker and her colleagues

(e.g. Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990) have used the term of collective self-esteem to characterize this self-evaluative component of social identity. They have developed a measure with four subscales that in its initial form referred to social group membership in general (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). However, the measure can also be used for specific group memberships such as ethnic identity, and particularly the private-collective subscale refers to the self-evaluative significance of group membership. We will refer to this aspect of identification as (private) ethnic self-esteem (see Ellemers et al., 1999).

In agreement with this distinction between a more cognitive and evaluative aspect of identification, we expected ethnic self-categorization to be empirically distinguishable from ethnic self-esteem. That is, a principal components analysis was expected to yield two separate clusters of items. Furthermore, depending on the intragroup and intergroup contexts, different effects may exist for ethnic self-esteem in particular.

SIT is predominantly a theory about intergroup processes. The focus is on relations and comparisons between groups. People are thought to evaluate their social identity in comparison to other groups. Hence, ethnic self-esteem may be especially expected to be related to self-descriptions in an intergroup context where status differences are salient and low ingroup status presents an identity threat. Several studies have found that differences between people with high and low psychological commitment to their group (high and low identifiers) are most apparent under conditions of identity threat (see Ellemers et al., 1999). Under these conditions, high identifiers tend to describe themselves more in terms of group-defining characteristics and differentiate their group more from the outgroup. Hence, ethnic self-esteem was expected to affect self-descriptions in an intergroup context.

In an acculturation framework, ethnic identification is often considered to be an aspect of psychological acculturation. However, ethnic identification has also been examined and found to occur independently of other acculturation aspects (Hutnik, 1991; Phinney, 1990; Ward & Raba-Deuba, 1999). An individual may identify predominantly with the Chinese while having made important cultural adjustments for effective living. The more people identify with their own ethnic group, the more likely they are to want to preserve their own culture and to evaluate their ingroup positively. For minorities, this means that a positive association may be expected between ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem, on the one hand, and heritage culture maintenance and ingroup evaluation, on the other. These relationships are probably stronger in an intergroup than an intragroup context. Divergent perceptions and evaluations of high and low identifiers have been more consistently found under conditions of high social group salience than when group salience is low (see Ellemers et al., 1999).

The relationship between ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem, on the one hand, and cultural contacts with the mainstream and outgroup evaluation, on the other, are less clear. Empirical evidence shows that the association between adaptation to the majority group culture and ethnic identification is non-existent or even positive (see Verkuyten, 1999). Furthermore, a preference for one's ethnic group does not necessarily mean that other groups are rejected (Brewer, 1999). On the contrary, and as indicated before, for many minority group members a positive ingroup evaluation is accompanied by a positive evaluation of the majority group (e.g. Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997; Verkuyten, 1999).

In examining the relationships between acculturation attitudes, group evaluations and identification, separate measures for public ethnic self-esteem and personal global self-esteem were also included. Public self-esteem is about how other people are believed to evaluate the participant's ethnic group (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Verkuyten and Lay (1998) found a significant positive association between ethnic self-esteem and the extent to which Chinese participants think that the Dutch evaluate their ingroup positively. Furthermore, the perceived public image or social respect of one's group is an important acculturative influence (Berry, 1990). Hence, it is possible that acculturation attitudes and ingroup favouritism are related to public ethnic self-esteem rather than to private ethnic self-esteem (Long & Spears, 1998).

A measure of personal global self-esteem was included because self-esteem can be assessed at the personal and the collective level. There is an ongoing debate about the relative effects of personal and collective self-esteem and the empirical results are equivocal (see Aberson, Healy, & Romero, 2000; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998, for reviews). However, for SIT, intergroup differentiation is a group-level phenomenon. Therefore, ethnic self-esteem and not personal self-esteem was expected to determine group evaluations and acculturation attitudes.

To summarize, in the present research, self-descriptions, acculturation attitudes and group evaluations were examined in an intragroup (Chinese) and intergroup (Chinese versus Dutch) context. Following Self-Categorization Theory it was expected, first, that self-descriptions would differ between the two contexts. It was particularly expected that stereotypes that maximize perceived group differences would be used more in the intergroup than the intragroup context. Second, the group context was also expected to affect acculturation attitudes and group evaluations. Compared to an intragroup situation, in the intergroup context a stronger emphasis on cultural maintenance and stronger ingroup favouritism was expected to occur. Third, the role of forms of ethnic identification was examined. It was expected that ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem could be distinguished empirically, and that both differ from public self-esteem. Furthermore, ethnic self-esteem was expected to determine self-descriptions in an intergroup context and not in an intragroup context. In addition, ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem were expected to have positive relations with both the importance attached to heritage culture maintenance and ingroup favouritism. These effects for forms of identification were expected in the intergroup context in particular. Finally, ethnic self-esteem and not personal self-esteem was expected to be related to acculturation attitudes and ingroup favouritism.

METHOD

Participants

The study was conducted with a group of 151 students of Chinese descent from the Universities of Leiden, Rotterdam and Delft. The students were contacted through Chinese student organizations and personal contacts. They were asked to participate in a research on how Chinese people in the Netherlands feel about their ethnic background and their position in the Netherlands. In the introduction it was emphasized that the research focused on Chinese living in the Netherlands. The sample consisted of 78 females and 73 males. The participants were aged between 17 and 28 years, and the mean age was 21.03. Ninety-two per cent of the participants had been born in the Netherlands or had immigrated before the age of 5. Eighty-three per cent had Dutch nationality, and 12% held double citizenship (Dutch and Chinese). Most of the participants' mothers and/or fathers came from the People's Republic of China (41% of the fathers and 31% of the mothers) or from Hong Kong and the New Territories (39% of the fathers and 43% of the mothers).

Design and Measures

An experimental questionnaire study was carried out during meetings with groups of ten to fifteen students. The study was explained to the students at the end of each session.

There were two versions of a two-part questionnaire that were distributed randomly among the participants. Part 1 contained an experimental manipulation and part 2 was the same for all participants, assessing the individual difference variables.

The experimental manipulation was introduced early on in the questionnaire by a separate paragraph containing instructions for a self-rating task. SCT argues that both social and personal identity are the result of comparative processes. For personal identity the differences between oneself and other ingroup members are emphasized, whereas social identity depends on comparisons between the in- and an outgroup. Hence, the instructions focused the participants' attention on either an intragroup or an intergroup context. A variant of Markus's (1977) self-rating paradigm as adapted by Turner and Onorato (1999) was used. In the ingroup condition, Markus's usual 'me/not me' self-rating task was presented and in the intergroup condition Turner and Onorato's 'us/them' rating task was used. In the intragroup condition ($N = 75$), participants received the following instruction: 'We would like you to think of yourself as Chinese, and we would like you to think of the characteristics you have *in comparison to other Chinese people*. Below is a list of characteristics; please indicate whether you think they describe you or not. If you think they do *compared to other Chinese*, please respond by marking a number at the side with the label "ME". If you think the characteristic is more descriptive of other Chinese people, please mark a number at the side with the label "NOT ME". The closer your mark is to the "me" or to the "not me", the more you think the characteristic applies.'

In the intergroup condition ($N = 76$), the instruction ran as follows: 'We would like you to think of yourself as Chinese, and we would like you to think of the characteristics you have *in comparison to the Dutch*. Below is a list of characteristics; please indicate whether you think they describe you or not. If you think they do *compared to Dutch people*, please respond by marking a number at the side with the label "US". If you think the characteristic is more descriptive of Dutch people, please mark a number at the side with the label "THEM". The closer your mark is to the "us" or to the "them", the more you think the characteristic applies.'

Following the instructions, eight ingroup stereotypical trait adjectives were given that had to be rated on a bipolar scale. Underneath each trait there was the label 'ME' ('US') on the one side, and on the other, the label 'NOT ME' ('THEM'). The space between the labels was marked with the numbers four to zero and then going up again to four. The responses were coded on a nine-point scale, with a higher score indicating a higher self-rating or stronger self-description ('me' or 'us'). The eight traits were chosen on the basis of literature (e.g. Bond & Hwang, 1986; Geense & Pels, 1998), as well as interviews with ten Chinese students. These students were asked to indicate what they considered typically Chinese. The eight descriptive features or traits that were used most often by the students and that were indicated in the literature, were chosen. They were: 'emotionally controlled', 'reserved', 'respectful', 'modest', 'composed', 'patient', 'obedient', and 'with a sense of duty'.

Directly following these questions, the participants were asked to answer questions on heritage culture maintenance and cultural contacts with the mainstream, and group evaluations.

We measured the two dimensions of acculturation using single-notion statements rather than multiple concepts. In order to assess the acculturation dimensions, we used questions on both 'culture' and 'relationships'. The two focal issues identified by Berry (1990) may be considered not fully comparable. The first issue involves cultural identity questions whereas the second focuses on contacts and relationships. However, Berry (1989, p. 216) explicitly argues that questions on culture and relationships are relevant in relation to both the ingroup and the outgroup. Hence, we examined 'cultural maintenance' in terms of the extent to which it was considered important by the Chinese to maintain their own culture as well as close ties with Chinese people. Cultural contacts with the mainstream was examined in terms of the importance attached to adopting Dutch culture and having close ties with the Dutch. For cultural maintenance the two items were 'I think it's important to maintain the Chinese culture', and 'I think it's important to have Chinese friends and acquaintances'. For cultural mainstream the items were 'I think it's important to adjust as much as possible to Dutch culture', and 'I think it's important to have Dutch friends and acquaintances'. The items were scored using the Likert-method, with scores ranging from 'no, certainly not' (1) to 'yes, certainly' (9). Using

these four items, principal components analysis with varimax rotation yielded two factors. The first factor explained 48.3% of the variance and the cultural mainstream items loaded on this factor (>0.88 on the first, and <0.23 on the second). The two items correlated 0.56. The second factor explained 29.8% of the variance and the two cultural maintenance items loaded on this factor (>0.89 on the second, and <0.22 on the first). These two items also correlated 0.56. Two composite measures were computed one for heritage culture maintenance and one for cultural contacts with the mainstream.

In order to measure global evaluation of the ingroup and the outgroup, the participants were given a 'feeling thermometer'. This thermometer has been used in different studies among both majority and minority group participants, also in the Netherlands (e.g. Dijker, 1987; Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993). The scale has a good (test-retest) reliability and correlates highly with measures using several items (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1994; Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991). The exact wording of the instructions was: 'Use the "feeling-thermometer" to indicate whether you have positive or negative feelings about Chinese (Dutch people). You may use any degree between 0 and 100. 100 degrees indicate very positive or warm feelings and zero degrees indicate very cold or negative feelings.' Following this, a scale was presented running from 0 to 100. An intergroup differentiation score was computed by subtracting the outgroup evaluation from the ingroup evaluation.

In part 2 of the questionnaire the individual difference variables were measured. This part was introduced by a separate page on which was printed 'PART TWO' as well as the following text: 'The second part of the questionnaire differs from the first part. Here, you will find some statements or questions. You are asked to indicate to what extent you *personally* agree with them.'

To assess ethnic self-categorization, private ethnic self-esteem and public collective self-esteem, eleven questions were used. All questions were answered using 7-point scales, with (1) indicating 'complete disagreement' and (7) 'complete agreement'. For ethnic self-categorization, three questions were used, partly taken from Karasawa (1991). The questions were 'I see myself as a typical Chinese', 'I am very similar to other Chinese in how I feel about things', and 'I think the same as other Chinese about important things in life'. In order to measure ethnic self-esteem, we used the four items of the private subscale of Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self-esteem Scale (CSE). This subscale assesses participants' evaluations of their own ethnic group (e.g. 'I feel good about being Chinese', and 'I am proud to be Chinese'). The public esteem aspect was assessed by using the public subscale of the CSE. This subscale measures the participants' beliefs about how other people evaluate their ethnic group. In the present study, by 'other people' the Dutch were meant (e.g. 'In general, Dutch people respect the Chinese', and 'The Dutch do not really value Chinese people').

One of our research questions was whether these three aspects could be distinguished empirically. Therefore, information about underlying dimensions and reliabilities will be presented in the Results section.

Personal self-esteem was assessed using six items (on a 7-point scale) of Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale. Reliability analysis yielded an alpha equal to 0.81.

In the questionnaire's final section, the participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, nationality, place of birth, and the place of birth of both parents.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses did not indicate any significant differences for age, nationality or father's birthplace (People's Republic of China or Hong Kong). There was one gender difference, $F(1, 151) = 6.20$, $p < 0.01$. On the ingroup thermometer, males had a more positive score than females. No gender

differences were found for any of the other measures, and there were also no gender by experimental condition interaction effects. In addition, no gender differences were found in the relationships between the different measures (all z -values < 1.64 , $p > 0.05$). Therefore, data were collapsed across males and females.

Ethnic Identification and Self-esteem

It was expected that ethnic self-categorization is empirically distinguishable from ethnic self-esteem. Furthermore public self-esteem was discussed as a separate construct. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted in order to determine the underlying dimensions. A three-factor structure emerged. The first factor explained 33.1% of the variance, the second factor explained 22.2%, and the third factor explained 12.3%. The four items intended to measure ethnic self-esteem had a high load on the first factor (>0.65). The highest load of these items on the other two factors was 0.28. On the second factor, the three self-categorization items had a high load (>0.80) with a load <0.15 on the other two factors. The items for public self-esteem loaded only on the third factor (>0.73 and <0.26 on the other factors). Thus, the principal components analysis confirmed that a distinction can be made between an evaluative and cognitive aspect of ethnic identification as well as a public one. Hence, the items were summated to compute three scales. Cronbach's alpha for the ethnic self-esteem scale was 0.81. For ethnic self-categorization, alpha was 0.79, and for the public self-esteem scale it was 0.70.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the different scales. The mean scores for ethnic self-esteem, public self-esteem and personal self-esteem were all on the positive side of the 7-point scale. However, the mean score for ethnic self-categorization was low. Hence, the participants had a positive evaluation of their ethnic group membership, of how the Dutch perceived the Chinese, and of themselves personally, but they did not see themselves as very similar to other Chinese or as typically Chinese.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the different measures are also presented in Table 1. Higher ethnic self-esteem was related to higher self-categorization, to higher public self-esteem and to higher personal self-esteem. Self-categorization was not related to public and personal self-esteem. As expected, ethnic self-esteem and ethnic self-categorization shared only a limited amount of variance.

Participants in the intragroup and intergroup experimental condition did not differ significantly regarding ethnic self-esteem, $t(151) = 0.65$, $p > 0.10$, and personal self-esteem $t(151) = 0.22$, $p > 0.10$. There was a difference, however, regarding public self-esteem, $t(140.63) = 2.18$, $p < 0.05$. Participants in the intragroup condition had a higher score for public self-esteem ($M = 5.00$,

Table 1. Pearson-product moment correlation coefficients between the different identification and esteem measures. Mean scores and standard deviations

	1	2	3	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 Ethnic self-esteem	—			5.58	1.06
2 Ethnic self-categorization	0.21**	—		2.50	0.96
3 Public self-esteem	0.38***	0.03	—	4.81	1.06
4 Personal self-esteem	0.39***	-0.05	0.18*	5.19	1.03

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

$SD = 0.88$) than participants in the intergroup condition ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.18$). In addition, a similar difference (one-tailed) was found for ethnic self-categorization $t(151) = 1.72$, $p < 0.10$. Ethnic self-categorization was higher in the intragroup context ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.98$) compared to the intergroup context ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 0.93$).

Self-descriptions

We first examined the dimensionality of the eight traits. Principal components analysis with the eight traits yielded three factors with an eigenvalue > 1.0 . The first factor explained 33.7% of the variance and 'respectful', 'composed', 'modest', and 'obedient' loaded on this factor (> 0.62). The second factor explained 26.0% of the variance and the traits 'patient' and 'sense of duty' loaded on this factor (> 0.95). The third factor explained 14.7% of the variance and 'emotionally controlled' and 'reserved' had a high load (> 0.84). Principal components analyses for each experimental condition separately yielded different results, however. In the intragroup condition a three-factor structure emerged and in the intergroup condition a two-factor structure. Moreover, there were clear differences in factor structure between the two conditions. For example, in the intergroup condition six traits loaded on the first factor, as compared to just two traits that had their highest load on the first factor in the intragroup condition. Hence, in agreement with SCT (Oakes et al., 1994), the meaning of the traits was affected by the comparative context. Therefore, in the analysis we focused on the eight separate traits rather than on subscales.

We expected differences in self-ratings between the intragroup and intergroup condition. Particularly in the latter context participants were expected to self-stereotype themselves more. To examine this prediction, the eight traits were analysed as multiple dependent variables using MANOVA. The multivariate effect (Pillai's) was significant, $F(8, 151) = 10.69$, $p < 0.000$. This indicates that the experimental condition affects the self-ratings. Participants in the intergroup condition, as opposed to the intragroup condition, described themselves as more 'emotionally controlled', more 'reserved', more 'obedient', and marginally significant as more 'modest' (see Table 2). Hence, for four out of the eight traits participants described themselves more strongly in stereotypical terms when compared to the Dutch than when compared to other Chinese.³

Table 2. Mean scores and standard deviations for the eight trait adjective by group context

	Intragroup		Intergroup		Univariate
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> -value
Emotionally controlled	3.31	1.66	5.80	2.38	54.84***
Reserved	3.77	1.89	4.68	2.24	7.02**
Respectful	2.79	1.81	2.78	1.87	0.02
Modest	3.01	1.62	3.47	1.78	3.19 ^a
Composed	3.69	2.04	4.09	1.78	1.52
Patient	4.39	1.80	4.13	2.56	1.41
Obedient	3.19	1.86	3.93	2.18	4.56*
Sense of duty	3.25	1.74	3.03	1.88	1.38

^a $p = 0.08$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.000$.

³Because the mean level of public collective self-esteem differed between the two experimental conditions we also conducted an analysis with public self-esteem as a covariate. This analysis yielded similar results for the self-ratings. The main effect for public collective self-esteem was not significant, $F(1, 151) = 1.59$, $p > 0.10$.

The self-ratings were expected to be related to ethnic self-categorization and to ethnic self-esteem in the intergroup condition. A two-way analysis of variance (General Linear Model) was performed with experimental condition as a between-subjects factor and both identification measures as continued factors. The eight traits served as multiple dependent variables. The multivariate interaction effect between experimental condition and ethnic self-esteem was significant, $F(8, 151) = 2.35$, $p < 0.05$, and the multivariate interaction effect between experimental condition and ethnic self-categorization was also significant, $F(8, 151) = 3.26$, $p < 0.01$. As expected, the analysis indicated that only in the intergroup context was ethnic self-esteem positively related to self-descriptions in terms of being 'emotionally controlled', $F(1, 151) = 3.89$, $p < 0.05$, 'composed', $F(1, 151) = 6.01$, $p < 0.01$, and 'patient' $F(1, 151) = 5.64$, $p < 0.05$. Ethnic self-categorization, however, was only related to self-description in the intragroup condition. In this condition, higher ethnic self-categorization was related to a higher score on self-description in terms of being 'emotionally controlled', $F(1, 151) = 11.60$, $p < 0.01$, 'reserved', $F(1, 151) = 3.72$, $p < 0.05$, 'composed', $F(1, 151) = 13.47$, $p < 0.01$, 'patient', $F(1, 151) = 7.59$, $p < 0.01$, and 'obedient', $F(1, 151) = 5.61$, $p < 0.05$.

Cultural Maintenance and Cultural Contacts

Table 3 shows the Mean scores and Standard Deviations for the different dependent measures as well as the intercorrelations. On a 9-point scale, the participants were shown to be strongly in favour of 'cultural maintenance', and their score for 'cultural contacts' is also on the 'agree' side of the scale. Hence, they considered both heritage culture maintenance and contacts with the mainstream culture important. Pairwise comparison of means showed that the participants favoured cultural maintenance significantly more than contacts, $t(151) = 4.01$, $p < 0.001$. The moderate positive correlation between both measures indicates that cultural maintenance and cultural contacts with the mainstream were not considered two conflicting issues but as relatively independent dimensions that can co-exist.

Compared to the intragroup context, in the intergroup context a stronger emphasis on heritage culture maintenance was expected. Furthermore, ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem were expected to be related positively to the importance attached to cultural maintenance, particularly in the intergroup context. There were no specific expectations for cultural contacts with the mainstream.

Cultural maintenance and cultural contact scores were examined as multiple dependent variables using analysis of variance. The experimental condition (intragroup versus intergroup) was entered as a between-subjects factor, and ethnic self-esteem, ethnic self-categorisation, public self-esteem, and

Table 3. Pearson-product moment correlation coefficients between the different measures. Mean scores and standard deviations

	1	2	3	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 Cultural maintenance	—			7.02	1.73
2 Cultural contact mainstream	0.24**	—		6.32	1.78
3 Ingroup thermometer	0.37**	0.11	—	6.57	1.80
4 Outgroup thermometer	0.10	0.34**	0.25**	6.54	1.67

** $p < 0.01$.

personal self-esteem were entered as continued factors. Preliminary analyses did not indicate any significant higher-order interaction effects.

Three significant multivariate effects were found, for experimental condition, $F(2, 151) = 4.32$, $p < 0.01$, ethnic self-categorization, $F(2, 151) = 12.34$, $p < 0.000$, and ethnic self-esteem, $F(2, 151) = 6.31$, $p < 0.01$. The analysis showed that participants in the intergroup condition were more strongly in favour of heritage culture maintenance ($M = 7.21$, $SD = 1.36$) than those in the intragroup condition ($M = 6.82$, $SD = 2.03$), $F(1, 151) = 3.83$, $p < 0.05$. Furthermore, ethnic self-esteem and ethnic self-categorization had independent positive effects on heritage culture maintenance, $F(1, 151) = 21.46$, $p < 0.000$, and $F(1, 151) = 12.33$, $p < 0.01$, respectively.

No significant effects were found for 'cultural contacts'. Thus, none of the measures were related to the importance attached to cultural contacts with the mainstream.

Classification of the participants in the four acculturation positions can be achieved by a bipartite split of the two acculturation scales. The scalar midpoint was used whereby scores equal to and lower than the midpoint (5) were classified as low and the rest as high.⁴ This split resulted in thirteen participants classified as marginal (9%), fifteen as assimilated (10%), 40 as separated (26%) and 84 as integrated (55%). Thus, four positions of acculturation were evident. The Chinese (separation) and bicultural (integrative) positions were predominant.

Because few participants indicated an assimilative or a marginal position, we used only three categories in the subsequent analyses: separation, integration and assimilation or marginalization. These three categories differed significantly in the experimental conditions, $\chi^2(1, 151) = 7.22$, $p < 0.05$.⁵ In both conditions, an equal percentage of participants indicated an integrative position of acculturation (56.6% in the intragroup condition and 53.9% in the intergroup condition). However, in the intergroup condition, 34.2% of the participants reported a separated position and 11.8% an assimilated/marginalized position. In the intragroup condition, these percentages were 18.4% and 25%. Thus, in the intergroup condition, separation was stronger than in the intragroup condition.

Group Differentiation in Evaluations

The scores for the in- and outgroup thermometer turned out to be very similar and above the mid-point of the scale (Table 3). Hence, no ingroup favouritism was found in the evaluations. The two measures showed a positive moderate intercorrelation. Furthermore, Table 3 shows that the evaluation of the ingroup was significantly and positively related to cultural maintenance only whereas the evaluation of the outgroup was significantly related to cultural contacts with the mainstream. However, the correlations show that the different measures share not more than 14% of their variance.

Ingroup favouritism was expected to differ in the intergroup and intragroup context. Furthermore, ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem were expected to be related positively to ingroup favouritism, particularly in the intergroup context. To test these predictions, analysis of variance was performed with group differentiation as a dependent variable. Experimental condition was a between-subjects factor and ethnic self-esteem, ethnic self-categorization, public collective self-esteem and personal self-esteem were continued factors. The results showed a significant effect for the experimental condition, $F(1, 151) = 6.61$, $p < 0.01$. In the intergroup condition, the participants showed more ingroup favouritism ($M = 0.41$, $SD = 1.90$), than in the intragroup condition ($M = -0.39$, $SD = 2.28$). However, both in the intergroup and the intragroup condition no significant ingroup favouritism was found (respectively $t(76) = 1.77$, $p > 0.05$, and $t(75) = 1.46$, $p > 0.10$). Ethnic

⁴We used the scalar midpoint because this results in a more 'pure' content-based classification scheme compared to using the median score that relies on a relative within-sample classification scheme.

⁵With the four acculturation positions, a significant difference was also found, $\chi^2(df = 3) = 7.61$, $p < 0.05$.

self-esteem and ethnic self-categorization had significant positive main effects on intergroup differentiation, $F(1, 151) = 4.19, p < 0.05$, and $F(1, 151) = 9.34, p < 0.001$. Higher ethnic self-esteem and higher ethnic self-categorization were both independently related to stronger ingroup favouritism. Personal self-esteem and public self-esteem had no independent significant effects. There were also no significant interaction effects.

In addition to intergroup differentiation, we examined the in- and outgroup evaluations separately as multiple dependent variables in analysis of variance. Three significant multivariate effects (Pillai's) were found, for ethnic self-esteem, $F(2, 151) = 10.58, p < 0.001$, ethnic self-categorization, $F(2, 151) = 9.05, p < 0.01$, and public self-esteem, $F(2, 151) = 3.16, p < 0.05$. Separate analysis with ingroup evaluation as a dependent variable indicated that participants with a higher score on ethnic self-categorization liked their ingroup more than participants with a lower score, $F(1, 151) = 17.96, p < 0.001$. Similar positive effects were found for ethnic self-esteem, $F(1, 151) = 9.91, p < 0.001$, and for public self-esteem, $F(1, 151) = 5.10, p < 0.05$.

For outgroup evaluation there was a significant effect for ethnic self-esteem, $F(1, 151) = 7.24, p < 0.01$. Higher ethnic self-esteem was related to lower outgroup evaluation. There were no significant effects for personal self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

The main finding of this study is that the social comparative context affects ethnic minority identity. Three ethnic issues or aspects of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990) were examined in an intragroup and intergroup context: self-descriptions, acculturation attitudes, and group evaluations. All three were found to be affected by the comparative context. This shows that aspects of ethnic minority identity depend on the comparative group context in which they are made sense of. Various scholars from different disciplines, including social psychology, have stressed the need to examine ethnic identity in context. However, only a few studies have actually done so. These studies have found that aspects of ethnic identity are context and situation specific (e.g. Brown, 1998; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). In these studies, however, the question of why and how ethnic identity varies in different situations is not really addressed from a clear theoretical perspective. In Self-Categorization Theory (Turner et al., 1987) this question is central and the present findings were in agreement with this theory.

It was found that self-ratings on trait adjectives differ between an intragroup and intergroup context. How participants described themselves varied according to the level of self-definition. In relation to the Dutch, the Chinese participants described themselves more in ingroup stereotypical terms than they did in relation to other Chinese. Importantly, the differences in self-ratings were in agreement with the relevance of particular dimensions for defining categories in relation to each other. That is, familiar and commonly used stereotypes about the Chinese, such as being reserved, emotionally controlled, obedient, and modest (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Geense & Pels, 1998) were used more often for self-description in the intergroup than in the intragroup context. However, not all self-ratings were affected by the comparison context. This may be due to the fact that the student participants did not estimate all trait adjectives as equally stereotypical.

This assumption was partly confirmed in a posttest that was conducted among twenty Chinese students who did not participate in the study. They were asked on a 9-point scale (1 = not at all typical for Chinese, 9 = really typical for Chinese) to indicate how typical the eight traits are for Chinese people living in the Netherlands. The results show that with the exception of 'patience' ($M = 4.8, SD = 1.77$), all the mean scores were above the mid-point of the scale: for 'composed' ($M = 5.6$,

$SD = 1.79$). for 'reserved' ($M = 6.1$, $SD = 0.97$), for 'obedient' ($M = 6.5$, $SD = 1.76$), for 'sense of duty' ($M = 6.9$, $SD = 1.13$), for 'modest' ($M = 7.1$, $SD = 1.23$), for 'emotionally controlled' ($M = 7.2$, $SD = 1.15$), and for 'respectful' ($M = 7.4$, $SD = 1.27$). Hence, almost all traits were considered stereotypical for Chinese people. Furthermore, three of the traits that in the experimental study showed a difference between the intergroup and the intragroup condition (emotionally controlled, obedient, and modest) were among the five most typical ones.⁶

According to SCT, not only the content but also the meaning of self-descriptions are determined by the comparative context (Oakes et al., 1994). In the present study the group context affected the dimensionality of the underlying dimensions of the trait adjectives. In the intragroup context, three underlying dimensions were found whereas in the intergroup condition the principal components analysis yielded two. Furthermore, in one condition, traits loaded on one dimension and in the other condition, these traits loaded on another dimensions. Hence in agreement with SCT, to describe oneself as patient, composed or having a sense of duty in relation to Chinese ingroup members seems to have a different meaning from what it does in relation to Dutch outgroup members.

The group context did not only affect self-descriptions but also acculturation attitudes and group evaluations. For acculturation attitudes it was found that in the intergroup context participants strongly endorsed the importance of heritage culture maintenance. In contrast, in the intragroup condition, participants were less in favour of heritage culture maintenance. Furthermore, the familiar four acculturation positions were found: separation, integration, assimilation and marginalization. In agreement with other Dutch studies, separation and integration predominated (see Verkuyten, 1999). However, in the intergroup context, a third of the participants indicated a separated position whereas in the intragroup condition, this was the case for less than one-fifth. These results are important for interpreting existing research on acculturation. This research typically investigates acculturation attitudes in relation to the majority group. Hence, implicitly an intergroup context is used for examining questions of cultural maintenance and change and no attention is paid to the distinctions and relationships within the own group.

In the intergroup context, the participants also showed more ingroup favouritism than in the intragroup condition. Other studies have found that the determinants of group evaluations, such as authoritarian values and stereotypical beliefs, depend on the group context (e.g. Reynolds et al., 2001; Verkuyten & Hagendoorn, 1998). These studies, however, have not found context effects for mean scores. The present result shows that ingroup favouritism differs between the intragroup and intergroup context. Although in both conditions no significant ingroup favouritism was found, there was a stronger evaluative distinction in favour of the Chinese in the intergroup context compared to the intragroup context. A possible reason is that particularly in the former context, ingroup favouritism may contribute to a positive social identity. The difference in ingroup favouritism suggest that the question of how the group context and the self is defined should be considered in addition to the many other factors that are taken into account in research on group evaluations.

In addition to the group context, the role of ethnic identification was examined. In agreement with other studies (Ellemers et al., 1999; Spears et al., 1997; Verkuyten & Nekuee, 1999), it was found that ethnic self-categorization (the more cognitive aspect of identification) and ethnic self-esteem (the evaluative aspect) were empirically distinct and relatively independent aspects of identification. In addition, both had independent positive effects on acculturation attitudes and ingroup favouritism. As expected, higher ethnic self-categorization and higher ethnic self-esteem turned out to be related to stronger endorsement of heritage culture maintenance and greater ingroup favouritism.

There were also some differences, however. Ethnic self-esteem was related to both the ingroup and the outgroup aspect of ingroup favouritism, whereas ethnic self-categorization was only related to the

⁶Pair-wise test of means showed significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between these three traits and the three traits that were considered least typical of the Chinese ('patient', 'composed', and 'reserved').

ingroup aspect. Furthermore, ethnic self-esteem was related to self-ratings in the intergroup context but not to those in the ingroup context. In the former context, higher ethnic self-esteem was associated with greater ingroup stereotyping. In contrast, ethnic self-categorization was positively related to self-descriptions in the ingroup condition only.

These results show that ethnic identification can have different effects depending on its conceptualization. In agreement with Social Identity Theory, ethnic self-esteem seems primarily relevant in an intergroup context where status differences are salient and the value of one's group membership is at stake (Ellemers et al., 1999). In such a situation people can respond by increased self-stereotyping. The finding that acculturation attitudes and ingroup favouritism were only related to group level self-esteem and not to personal self-esteem, is also in agreement with SIT.

Ethnic self-categorization showed effects in both the intergroup and the ingroup context. This conceptualization of identification is more in agreement with SCT which presents a general theory of group phenomena. Individual differences in the general tendency to see oneself as a typical group member is relevant in relation to the ingroup and to outgroups. Ethnic self-categorization was related to self-descriptions in the ingroup context, and self-categorization was related to heritage culture maintenance and to group evaluations in both the intra- and intergroup context.

However, the effects of ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem on acculturation and ingroup favouritism were not moderated by the group context. We expected identification to have stronger effects in the intergroup than the ingroup condition, but no interaction effects were found. A possible reason is that high identifiers who feel strongly committed to their ethnic group are more inclined to protect their group's image and position. For them, heritage culture maintenance and a positive attitude towards the ingroup can be important for psychological reasons independent of the group context. For high identifiers, issues of cultural maintenance and cultural change may have not only relevance in relation to the majority group but are also raised in relation to one's own group. This is shown by charges of 'betrayal' and 'disloyalty' using terms such as 'acting white', 'selling out', 'coconut' and 'bounty' that are found among ethnic minority groups in different countries.

A final result we would like to discuss concerns the acculturation dimensions. For most ethnic minority groups, cultural contacts with the mainstream is important for acquiring a position in society. However heritage cultural maintenance is also important for social, political and psychological reasons. In view of these, it is neither very practical nor realistic to regard cultural maintenance and cultural contacts as mutually exclusive. Rather, it is to be expected that minority members will emphasize the importance of both. The results support this expectation. The Chinese participants emphasized the importance of both heritage culture maintenance and cultural contacts with the mainstream although the former was considered more important. Heritage culture maintenance and cultural contacts were not seen as opposites but showed a moderate positive correlation. Furthermore, ethnic self-categorization and ethnic self-esteem were positively related to heritage culture maintenance but not to cultural contacts. Hence, for the Chinese participants there was no contradistinction between identification with their ethnic group and the extent to which they favoured cultural contacts with the mainstream.

These results are similar to other studies carried out in the Netherlands (see Verkuyten, 1999) and support a two-dimensional conceptualisation of acculturation (e.g. Ryder et al., 2000; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Ethnic minorities are faced with the issue of dual group identity and for most of them, cultural adaptation is not contradictory to heritage culture maintenance. However, this is not to say that such a contradiction never occurs or that acculturation attitudes are independent of the comparative context. For example, situations such as conflicts and hostilities may require clear choices, making agreement with both issues very unlikely.

To evaluate the present results and to give some suggestions for further study, a number of conceptual and methodological questions will be considered. First, for SCT, comparison processes are

central for understanding personal and social identity. The focus is on the self as comparative, relational judgements rather than as subsets of mental structures (Turner & Onorato, 1999). This perspective has consequences for the method we used and for what we are—and are not—arguing. In our study we made the participant's Chinese identity salient and we asked them to compare themselves either in relation to other Chinese or to the Dutch. Thus, the focus was on comparison processes and identity salience, and not on the self-concept as a cognitive–affective structure. Hence, we do not argue, for example, that the participants always conceive of themselves as Chinese and do not, or cannot, see themselves as Dutch or as Chinese–Dutch. On the contrary, identities are not fixed and singular. However, in some situations one's ethnic identity is more salient than in others and, as we have tried to show, identity salience has consequences for perception and evaluation. The result is a flexible and dynamic perspective on how ethnic minority groups perceive themselves, others and questions of acculturation. This perspective shifts the emphasis from ethnic identity as an internalized and enduring psychological characteristic to ethnic perceptions and evaluations as comparative and variable responses in which people are trying to make sense of the ethnic group membership in context.

Second, there are three alternative explanations for the contextual differences in self-descriptions. One is that the difference between the two conditions stem from different conceptions of the comparison other (Dutch or Chinese) rather than from any variation in self-description. Participants may consider themselves equally emotionally controlled in both conditions. However, they may describe themselves as more emotionally controlled in the intergroup context than in the intragroup context because they consider the Dutch as less emotionally controlled than the Chinese. This interpretation starts from the idea that people have a particular enduring self-image, which they may or may not express accurately. From this point of view, the result may indeed reflect (in part) differences in comparison other. However, one could also argue that people use categories flexibly as a function of context, so that self-descriptions are always expressed in social settings. What our results then show is that there are variations in self-descriptions depending on the specific group context. Furthermore, in the introduction the participants were explicitly asked to think about themselves as Chinese and to think about the characteristics they have in comparison to others. The focus was on the comparison process and it is doubtful whether the difference found is only due to a different evaluation of the comparison other. Furthermore, this alternative interpretation cannot explain the context effects for cultural maintenance and ingroup favouritism.

Another interpretation is that in the method used not only context was varied (intragroup versus intergroup) but also the rating target (me versus us). It is possible that individual and group targets are generally rated quite differently (e.g. Moghaddam, Stolkin, & Hutcheson, 1997) and that such a difference interferes with the context variation. Again, this interpretation cannot explain the context effects for cultural maintenance and ingroup favouritism. Furthermore, this interpretation implies a distinction between group context and level of self-conception. Theoretically, SCT argues for a close relationship between the two: personal identity would be related to intragroup comparisons in particular, whereas social self-categorization is more likely to occur in an intergroup context (e.g. Hogg & Turner, 1987). Empirically, personal and group ratings have been found to actually depend on, respectively, intragroup and intergroup comparisons (e.g. Postmes, Branscombe, Spears, & Young, 1999). However, it would be interesting to examine, for example, a kind of quasi-intergroup situation in which the outgroup but not the ingroup is a salient entity (Simon, 1993). Thus, a Chinese person could be asked to indicate what is typical for him ('me') in comparison to Chinese as well as to Dutch people.

A third point relates to the intragroup context used. The participants were asked to rate themselves in comparison to other Chinese people. In principle, it is possible that they have compared themselves as Chinese living in the Netherlands with Chinese living in China or elsewhere. This would imply

another intergroup context rather than an intragroup one. However, in the introduction of the study it was emphasized that the research focused on Chinese living in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the use of the term 'me' to indicate the rating target makes it more likely that an intragroup comparison was activated rather than an intergroup one in which Chinese people living in the Netherlands are compared to other groups of Chinese.

Finally, following SCT we treated ethnic self-categorization and self-esteem as predictors. From a self-categorization viewpoint, measures of identification are useful for assessing a person's readiness to use a social category for self-description. These assessments were made in a separate part of the questionnaire in which the participants were asked explicitly to give their personal opinions. However, the measures were presented after the experimental manipulation and dependent variables. Hence, it could be argued that these measures were influenced by the manipulation and evaluation measures. Differences between the two experimental conditions were indeed found for ethnic self-categorization and public self-esteem, but not for ethnic and personal self-esteem. In the intragroup context, participants had a more positive score for public self-esteem and they tended to self-categorize more strongly. The former result shows that the Dutch are perceived to evaluate Chinese people less positively in an intergroup context. The latter result suggests that the inclination to see oneself as a typical group member is a less stable individual characteristic than the evaluative and emotional significance of group membership. Furthermore, the stronger ethnic self-categorization in the intragroup context may be responsible (partly) for the finding that self-categorisation was related to self-descriptions in this group context only.

In conclusion, the present results show that self-perceptions, acculturation attitudes, and group evaluations were all affected by the comparative group context. Questions of self-definitions, heritage culture maintenance, and group evaluations seem to have different meanings depending on whether they are in relation to Chinese people or to the Dutch. Most studies have examined ethnic minority identity only in relation to the majority group. Processes and comparisons within the ethnic group, which are also important, tend to be ignored. However, there are clearly limits to using an exclusive minority-majority perspective. Ethnic identity does not merely consist of minority status and treating it as such greatly limits the ability to examine and understand the richness of meanings and experiences associated with it (Sellers et al., 1998). In addition to the minority aspect of ethnic minorities, the ethnic aspect or ingroup processes should be considered. Furthermore, not only intragroup comparisons are important but also multiple intergroup ones. Often it is not just the majority group that is relevant because there is a variety of groups in relation to whom people define their ethnic identity (see Taylor, Moghaddam, & Bellerose, 1989; Verkuyten, 1997).

The present study has tried to show that for understanding and analysing ethnic minority identity it is useful to study categorization and comparison in both an intergroup context and an intragroup one. The way minority group members describe themselves, and evaluate the position of their group in society as well as the dominant group, all depend on the comparative group context. The results indicate the need for more context sensitive approaches to ethnic identity, in addition to studies on more enduring and relatively stable characteristics. Future studies may examine the generality of the present results by focusing on different ethnic minority groups in different countries and in different group contexts.

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